

LEADERSHIP EMPOWERMENT ACTION PROJECT (LEAP)

Trainers' Guide

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Center for the Child Care Workforce

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Introduction

Helping children to learn and grow, to question and create, to solve conflicts and honor differences, to trust themselves and others....Nurturing, comforting, playing, guiding....We know that the work we do every day in child care is vitally important. We know we make a daily difference in children's and parents' lives. But why is it often so difficult to sustain *ourselves* in this profession?

Whether we call ourselves child care workers, family day care providers, preschool or early childhood teachers, assistants or aides or caregivers, we are working in a field where most of us are severely underpaid and undervalued. More than one-third of the child care workforce is likely to leave the field this year, and at such a rate of turnover, the shortage of trained and qualified staff has become a national crisis. Those of us who do remain on the job share the extra burden of constantly training new co-workers, and the quality of care for children and families keeps declining dangerously.

How will the child care staffing crisis be solved? It is becoming constantly clearer that we ourselves must mobilize, as teachers and providers who have learned to be advocates and agents of change on our own behalf, and as leaders who can bring in other partners and allies to press for solutions. This is why the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) has developed the Leadership Empowerment Action Project (LEAP)--to keep teachers and providers at the forefront of the movement for better child care jobs, by training a corps of grassroots leaders and organizers in early childhood communities across the country. Since the project began in 1994, as an outgrowth of the grassroots Worthy Wage Campaign, LEAP trainings have been held in over a dozen states, helping teachers and providers to come together, learn how our own work experiences connect with larger social forces, build new skills, and take action.

CCW was founded in 1978 as the Child Care Employee Project, by San Francisco Bay Area teachers who were concerned about the low pay and status of their work, and for over 20 years, we have persistently called national attention to the needs of the child care workforce through a unified program of research, public policy advocacy, training, publications, and community organizing. We were one of many groups that came together in November 1991 to found the Worthy Wage Campaign, a grassroots effort to empower child care workers to challenge and solve the staffing crisis, and we now serve as the Campaign's coordinator. In turn, our work comes out of a long history of worker-based movements to improve child care jobs, beginning as far back as the 1940s with union campaigns in Los Angeles, New York and other cities, and the rise of teacher advocacy groups in several communities in the 1960s and 1970s.

In many ways, our movement has been a success. We have placed the issues of better compensation and working conditions for teachers and providers squarely "on the table" in the national child care debate, and more and more people are now active across the country in seeking solutions to the staffing crisis. And yet, in many ways, the crisis has continued to worsen. Poverty-level wages remain a hallmark of the field; both new and experienced child care staff are becoming harder than ever to find and retain; turnover rates are climbing; and welfare reform and other forces are creating an ever higher demand for good, reliable child care services. Today, there is a greater need than ever for the voice of teachers and providers as leaders to be strengthened and heard.

But what do we mean by "leadership"? For some, the word may sound too unreachable or forbidding. Perhaps it reminds us of an old, top-down, authoritarian style that we have come to reject--leadership based on a single, dominant personality. A primary goal of LEAP is to help early childhood teachers and providers redefine for ourselves what leadership is--and to show that we already have many of the skills it takes. Building leadership means creating opportunities to:

- find our own voices and articulate what we know;
- name and understand the barriers and dilemmas we share in common in the child care field;
- experience and use our own power in finding solutions;
- connect our confidence and knowledge about working with children to the tasks of working with adults; and
- strengthen ourselves and the compensation movement as a whole.

Our own experiences reflect the issues best: we know how the instability of the child care workforce affects not only our own well-being, but the stability and potential of young children's lives. Only we can move child care compensation from a problem that might be solved someday, to one that must be solved *now*. Our voices carry urgency, authenticity and strength.

We recognize that each individual in the movement is worthy, important and powerful--and at the same time, we know that we can't do this work alone. The primary purpose of this Trainers' Guide is to help trainers work with groups of teachers and providers who will be able to continue growing and taking action in their communities. The guide is designed to be adaptable to LEAP trainings in a variety of settings--weekend retreats, workshops, meetings of Worthy Wage groups or other teacher and provider associations, and other training and organizing events. The book combines a narrative presentation with ideas for group discussions, activities, exercises and actions.

The three chapters of the book are designed to reflect what are, in our view, the three critical stages of empowerment: coming to awareness; engaging in inquiry and analysis; and taking action. We articulate our own stories; we learn to interpret these experiences in the larger context of history and community; and we use that knowledge to identify appropriate steps toward change.

These stages are not merely linear or chronological; we prefer to view them as a cyclical or spiral process of growth. The division into three stages is actually somewhat artificial. Ideally, all three stages can be part of every meeting, class or workshop: telling about our experience; identifying common problems and barriers; and reaching agreement on some kind of course of action, whether large or small. A teacher at a LEAP training, for example, might want to tell about her experience of high staff turnover at her center, feeling that she can't do her best work when co-workers keep leaving. This could lead to a broader discussion of *why* turnover is so high in the child care field, and finally to an action plan about making some workplace improvements, using CCW's Model Work Standards, that might reduce turnover by encouraging staff to stay.

Awareness should lead to further inquiry; inquiry should lead to action; action should lead to deeper awareness; and so the cycle continues. The strongest movements continue this cycle, emphasizing the process of building a caring community, and welcoming new people in. Whether it's our two-thousandth meeting or our first, we believe in remembering the importance of speaking to each other, and listening to each other, about what matters most and about what sustains us in our work. We believe in fostering a movement "culture" that keeps its focus not only on moving toward its short- and long-term goals, but on appreciating and honoring each person along the way.

This guide, like the LEAP project itself, is still evolving. Please give us your feedback on how to improve it for future editions. Tell us about your experiences in using it, and about activities that have worked especially well for you. We thank you for your work in making LEAP a growing success.

Notes and Tips for Trainers

Amidst the flurry of activity in a well-functioning center classroom or family child care home, there is a sense of order--even on a bad day. Children know what to expect in the course of a day, and are often quick to notice any change in routine. They feel confident that everyone will get a turn, whether it's to talk during circle time or to try the new paints. Enter a poor-quality program and the reverse is true: children are scattered, unfocused, and anxious that they will be overlooked.

While a high-quality family child care program or center classroom looks effortless, we all know how much planning it takes to create a smooth-running environment for children. Similarly, a well-run meeting or class for adults---one in which all participants feel free to express themselves, explore new ideas and try new things-- doesn't just happen because a group of adults come together. Thoughtful preparation and clarity of purpose are necessary to create a high-quality experience for adults, too.

As we work on solving the child care staffing crisis, meetings, workshops and classes are our main learning environments. How can we make them work for us? Often, the starting point can be our own experiences. By the time we reach adulthood, we have all had many experiences with other adults, whether in meetings, in classes, at a church or synagogue, or on the job. As you plan your LEAP training, think about meetings or trainings that you have liked and disliked, and how they made you feel. For example:

- Did you understand the purpose of the meeting/training?
- Did you have an opportunity to express your opinions?
- Did you feel pressured to express your opinions?
- How were decisions made? Did you understand the process?
- Did people follow through on responsibilities?
- Did the meeting/training start and end on time?
- Did one or two people dominate the meeting/training?
- Did the discussion stay on track?

As a LEAP trainer, you are an educator for social change, leading a process that is different in many ways from other kinds of training that child care teachers and providers might participate in. Discussing our own stories and workplace issues, the barriers to change that we face, and our desire to take action to improve our profession, can raise delicate issues and intense emotions in a group. In some ways, "trainer" may not be the right word for the LEAP experience; your role might be better described as a "facilitator" or "consciousness-raising leader," which implies a more equal relationship between you and the participants. It is especially important in a LEAP workshop or retreat that the

trainer/facilitator create a welcoming atmosphere in the group, set the tone for discussions, and help to build rapport and respect among group members.

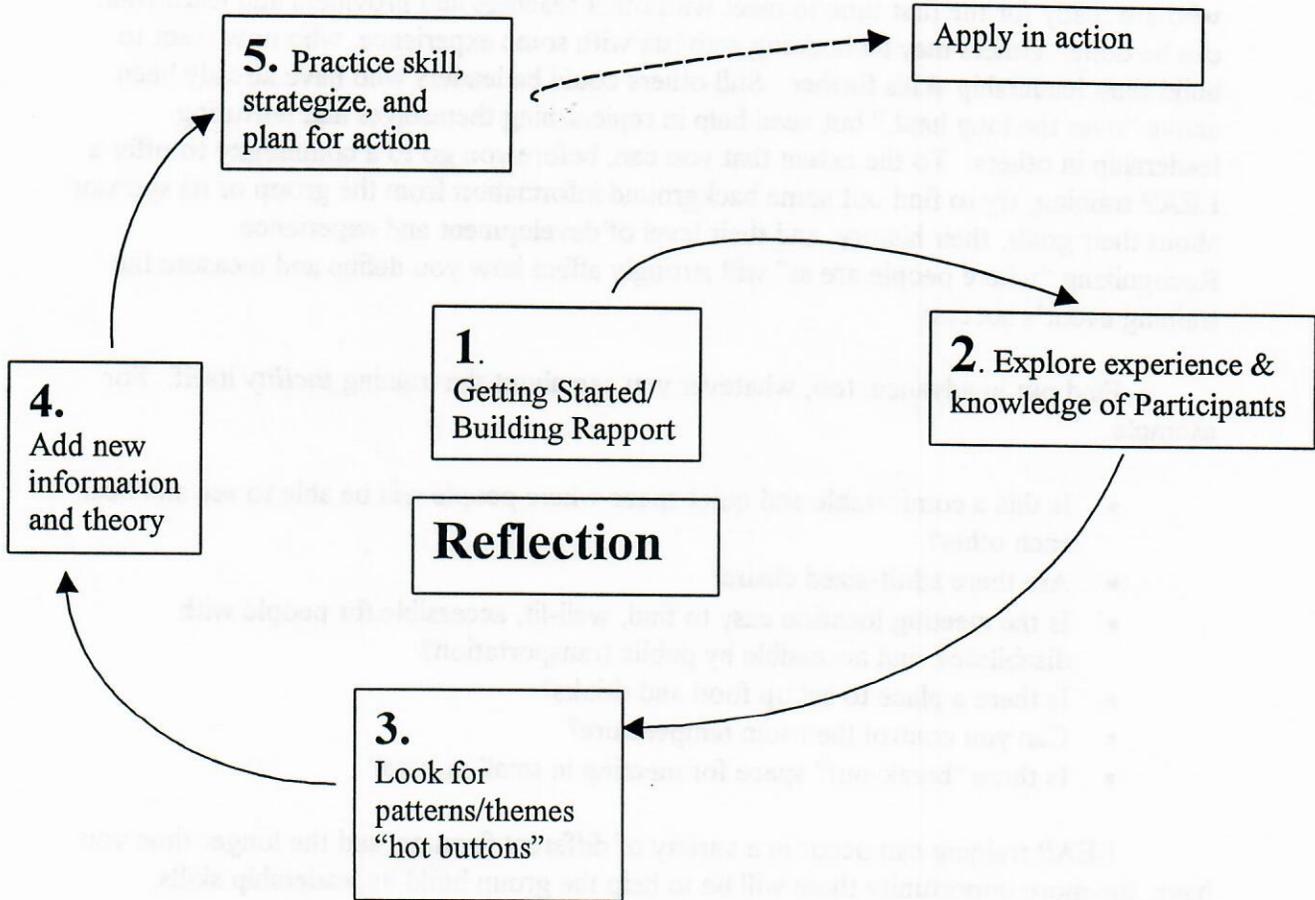
LEAP training tends to work best with teachers and providers who have some prior experience as child care advocates or activists, and it is best when it is not just a single "stand-alone" event. Like other training, putting what people have learned into action is a critical goal. But keep in mind that any given LEAP group you work with could contain people at very different "developmental levels." Some may be newcomers who are ready for the first time to meet with other teachers and providers and learn what can be done. Others may be budding activists with some experience, who now want to build their leadership skills further. Still others could be leaders who have already been active "over the long haul," but need help in replenishing themselves and nurturing leadership in others. To the extent that you can, before you go to a community to offer a LEAP training, try to find out some background information from the group or its sponsor about their goals, their history, and their level of development and experience. Recognizing "where people are at" will strongly affect how you define and measure the training event's success.

Find out in advance, too, whatever you can about the training *facility* itself. For example:

- Is this a comfortable and quiet space where people will be able to see and hear each other?
- Are there adult-sized chairs?
- Is the meeting location easy to find, well-lit, accessible for people with disabilities, and accessible by public transportation?
- Is there a place to set up food and drinks?
- Can you control the room temperature?
- Is there "break-out" space for meeting in small groups?

LEAP training can occur in a variety of different formats, and the longer time you have, the more opportunity there will be to help the group build its leadership skills. Ideally, a weekend or two-day retreat format is best. For a shorter workshop, such as a half-day or one-day event, recognize that you will only be able to cover a limited amount of material, and adjust your expectations accordingly. In some communities, LEAP has been offered as a 15-week, three-credit college course, which obviously gives a group much more time to work together, build specific skills such as fundraising or public speaking, develop and implement an action project, and cover a wide variety of subject matter. See the Appendix at the end of this guide for sample agendas of different training formats.

Whatever format or length of time you will be working with, one helpful way to think about the structure of any group learning experience is the Spiral Model. In this non-linear model, learning keeps happening in a continuous circle or spiral:



Stages of a Workshop

Adapted from: Arnold, R., Burke, B., James, C., Martin, D., and Thomas, B. (1991). Educating for Change.

The following discussion covers the key elements of planning and facilitating a meeting or training session that participants will find inclusive, productive and enjoyable.

1. Building Rapport: Introductions and "Ice Breakers"

Introductory activities can range from simply going around the room and saying names, to posing more involved warm-up questions for people to answer about their program or their reasons for coming to the LEAP training. But along with introductions, first impressions about a training event go a long way in shaping feelings about the experience. Among the issues to consider are:

- Is everyone personally greeted when they arrive?
- Are name tags available if everyone does not know each other?
- Beyond a hello, does everyone have information about the agenda—either receiving their own copy or shown where it is written for all to see?
- Has time been allotted to review the agenda? Sessions work best when people share an understanding of why they have come together and what they will be doing.

Try one of the following "ice breaker" activities for about 10-15 minutes at the beginning of each LEAP training:

1. *Human timeline.* Ask participants to line up in the room according to when they first became involved in child care (or in the compensation movement). Facilitators should give only minimal help so that people have to talk to one another to find their place in line. Once everyone has found a place, participants introduce themselves and the year they represent on the timeline. This can lead to a discussion of all the history, diversity, and/or shared experiences contained in the room. Taking segments of the timeline and noting what was happening in society in general, and in child care in particular, can give an interesting historical context to the work of creating social change. The line can also represent the continuum of leadership that is necessary to carry a movement forward. As we move into the "telling of stories," you may want to pair newcomers with more experienced people
2. *Sharing of symbols.* Ask participants to bring with them a tangible 'symbol' of their work with children to share with everyone. As individuals share their symbols, write down some of the themes that are presented. Given that we will be dealing with some of the hardest issues in our field, keep these symbols visible throughout the LEAP training to help ground the group in the positive aspects of our work, and to remind ourselves of what we love about it.

3. *The story behind the name.* As participants introduce themselves, ask them to tell the story of how they were given their names. In the process, many people find that they have something interesting to tell about family history, or about role models, mentors or heroes from the past.
4. *Find your match and face the facts.* On pieces of heavy card stock, write up various facts or questions related to the child care workforce. (For example: "Child care workers earn less than parking attendants." "One third of the child care workforce leaves the job each year.") Then cut each card into two "puzzle" pieces. As participants walk in, give each of them one puzzle piece. Their task is to find the matching piece, and to find out enough about the person holding it to introduce him or her to the group. In the process, you can also display the completed puzzles to lay the framework for future discussion. How do you respond emotionally, and intellectually, to these child care issues? How can we address these realities and still come out hopeful?
5. *Fishbowl.* As people enter, invite them to respond to a question that is then anonymously put into a 'fishbowl' with everyone else's answers. For example: "Name one hope, and one fear, that you have about participating in LEAP." "What does the word 'empowerment' mean to you?" "What does the word 'leadership' mean to you?" As people go around the room introducing themselves, they also take a note from the fishbowl and read it aloud to the group. This 'fishbowl' technique can also be used in other parts of the workshop, to solicit answers to difficult questions without putting individuals on the spot.
6. *Collage.* On a large piece of paper on a table, place lots of 'recyclable junk' or other art materials that can engage teachers' and providers' creative nature. Invite people as they enter to contribute to a group collage that represents their view of leadership and empowerment. This can be an ongoing 'work of art' that is added to throughout the workshop or retreat.

2. Setting Ground Rules

As a new group begins working together, it's helpful to set "agreements" or ground rules about how everyone will conduct themselves and relate to others. Here is one set of agreements that has worked well in many group settings.

Confidentiality. Each member of the group agrees that "what is said here will stay here," so that everyone can trust that it's safe to share personal information, and that nothing they say will be spread to others outside the group.

Respect. Different cultures and individuals define "respect" in different ways. Group members should reflect on their own definitions of how they show respect to others, and agree to do so here.

Personalize wisdom. Participants agree to speak from their own points of view (for example, "I believe....," "I know....," "I think...." or "I'm feeling at the moment...."), rather than making generalized or sweeping statements such as "everyone knows...." or "we all think...."

Listen attentively. All agree to listen and wait while others are speaking, not to jump in or finish each other's sentences, and to share the group's time fairly.

Value risk-taking and emotional expression. All agree to let each other take risks in what they say, to try out new ideas, and to express whatever feelings come up for them.

The right to "pass." The group allows anyone to "pass" or stay silent when she or he is not ready or inclined to speak on any given issue.

No put-downs. All agree to value everyone's contribution, and to refrain from insulting or slighting each other.

Each member assumes responsibility for the well-being of the whole group. All agree to be mindful of whether the group is working well together, and to do what they can to build harmony and rapport.

3. Facilitating Discussions

To facilitate something is to make it run smoothly. A facilitator:

- starts the meeting
- calls upon people during discussions
- helps people to clarify what they mean and to stay on the topic
- keeps track of time
- moves the group through its agenda.

If you are able to work with a partner, co-facilitating is a very helpful way for new (and experienced) leaders to share responsibility. In the thick of things, it is easy to get a little off track. If two people are facilitating, one can keep track of time and assess the emotional atmosphere in the group, while another focuses on moving through the agenda.

The following are some of the skills that assist facilitators in guiding discussions:

- listening
- gate-keeping
- supporting
- clarifying
- harmonizing
- summarizing
- relieving tension
- sharing information
- evaluating
- appreciating/encouraging
- maintaining focus

“Gate-keeping,” for example, means keeping the channel of communication open to all participants, making sure that everyone gets a chance to talk, and intervening or redirecting whenever anyone interrupts or rambles. As a gate-keeper, you might say, for example, “Joan, I see you have something to say over there,” or “Ellen, I think you’re discussing a different topic, which we’ll get to later.”

All of these skills are necessary for a group to run smoothly, but they don’t need to be embodied in just one person. Many of the participants in your group will have some of these skills, too, and you can encourage them to use them during the session.

4. Tools for Effective Facilitation

“Reading the group” accurately can greatly enhance the rapport between you and the other group members. Anticipating basic needs is the first step in this process. For example, plan for breaks if your session is lengthy, and provide food, comfortable chairs, adequate lighting and a comfortable room temperature. Be prepared to vary the session to address a variety of learning styles; some people will learn well through reading or writing activities, or by listening to a speaker, while others will do best when they can move around the room, role-play a workplace situation, discuss a topic with peers in a small group, or work with their hands.

Clarifying what someone has said is helpful to ensure common understanding and decrease the possibility of unnecessary conflict. Paraphrasing or checking for accuracy can help participants clarify their intentions and let them know that you hear them accurately.

Probing for specifics is a skill that facilitators can employ to help move individuals, or groups, from a position of “feeling stuck” to one of new understanding or enlightenment. By asking certain kinds of questions, a facilitator can coach a reflective process that often invites discovery and clarity. Examples of this type of question would include:

- What would that look like?
- How is what you’ve just said different from this other idea?
- Could you expand that further?

Depersonalizing conflict is essential in order to be an impartial facilitator. When working with diverse groups, the personality, tone or learning style needs of different participants may cloud your own perceptions and attitudes. It is essential to focus on issues, not personalities, when facilitating a challenging discussion or when it’s necessary to give difficult feedback. For instance, if “group behaviors” like blocking, sabotaging, excessive humor or monopolizing are occurring, you may need to step back for a moment and help the group identify whatever behavior or dynamics you’re observing. In any case, always attempt to remove your own ego from the conflict. As facilitator, you need to remain impartial in resolving controversy.

Bracketing is a technique that allows you to validate questions, comments and ideas while at the same time allowing the group to move forward. For example, if an issue is raised that is important to the group but is unrelated to its present task, you could record the it on newsprint, place it within brackets { } and indicate that this is an important topic the group could return to at a later time. It is also important to include bracketed information in the minutes. While helping you keep the session on track, this technique helps to set a tone that spontaneity and critical thinking are encouraged here.

Valuing each person’s contributions can go a long way in helping have a sense of participation and inclusion. There are several ways to do this:

- Give a person positive feedback for a comment; for example, “That’s a really good suggestion.”
- Bring back into the conversation a comment made previously that could otherwise be overlooked. For example, “Diane made a comment earlier about health insurance that would be useful to go back to now.”
- Provide a visual focus point, such as recording the main points of a discussion on a flip chart. A chart is a good to way to help participants keep track of what they’ve covered, any decisions they’ve made, and any items that have been “bracketed” or held over for future discussion.

- When using a flip chart, check with participants that you are accurately recording what they've said. Try to use phrases of their exact language as much as possible.

5. Nuts and Bolts

Beyond these interpersonal "tools," it is also a good idea to have a nuts-and-bolts "tool kit" ready to take with you to training events. Your kit could include:

- a variety of colored markers
- masking tape
- a timer or stopwatch
- pushpins
- paper clips
- name tags
- rubber bands
- post-it notes
- business cards
- a portable easel
- a large pad of newsprint
- a tape recorder

6. Dealing with Difficult Dynamics

Group work is challenging, even under the best of circumstances. Here are some typical problems that may emerge during sessions:

- Participants are doing distracting things, such as having separate conversations on the side.
- People come late, leave early, or walk in and out of the session.
- One or more people are dominating the discussion.
- Some group members are rarely or never joining in the discussion.
- Tension is developing between certain group members.
- Strong opinions or feelings are preventing constructive discussion.
- Body language (such as crossing one's arms tensely, or physically separating oneself from the rest of the group) is silently undermining the discussion.
- People are discussing many issues at once.

In each of these situations, the first task will be to determine what is at issue for those involved. If participants are doing distracting things, such as sending notes to

another person or walking in and out, their behavior may signal that they are not interested in or identified with what is going on. Maybe the particular discussion does not really need to involve the whole group, for example, and that is why it is not holding everyone's attention. Or maybe everyone needs a break. A facilitator can ask people directly what they need in order to feel more involved in the process, or can call a break and discuss the issue privately with the people concerned.

Another difficult dynamic to be aware of is "group think"--an excessive tendency to go along with others' opinions for the sake of maintaining harmony, but at the cost of critical thinking or risk taking. Pay attention to silences, which can be a significant "voice" of the group. If a silence falls that you find hard to interpret, you might say, "I'm not sure the silence means that everyone agrees, or that everyone has followed what we've been saying. Do any of you have a question or concern you'd like to put on the table at this point?"

It is important to be conscious of power relationships within the group. Because of the diversity in age, ethnicity, class and other experiences among those who work with young children, you can expect to find real differences among group members with respect to personal values, self-confidence and skills. Unknowingly, because of past educational and other experiences, some participants may move faster than others, preventing some from contributing to discussion. Take time to notice who is participating and engaged in the group. If only the European-Americans, the men or the center-based staff are speaking up, it will be necessary for the group to explore why people of color, women or family child care providers feel less involved.

7. Decision Making

Depending on the topic and structure of the session, there may be issues that you as the leader will want the group to decide as a whole. What process will be used to come to decisions? Will you strive for consensus (agreement by all participants) on all decisions, or will you abide by a majority vote when not everyone can agree?

When a group is coming to a decision, the leader or facilitator plays a critical role. You can point out areas of agreement and clarify where the real differences lie. (For example, "We've agreed that we want to focus on Model Work Standards, but we haven't decided whether to start with wages and benefits, or some of the non-monetary items.") It is important when coming to a decision that all members participate. You cannot assume that silence means agreement! Be sure that everyone expresses an opinion when a decision is being made.

Approaches to Decision Making

Individuals are more likely to support a decision in which they have played a part. Although it is often difficult to achieve a group decision, because people often lean heavily toward the solutions they've proposed themselves, it is crucial for participants to realize that avoiding a decision is, in fact, a decision – a choice *not* to move forward or change the status quo. Sound decisions are precursors to productive action and effective change.

Trainers can help groups make decisions in several ways. Group decisions are sometimes made by individuals or subgroups who push through a decision, relying on the passivity of the other participants. You can confront that pattern of decision making by commenting on its frequency and questioning whether all opinions are being taken into consideration.

Decision-making methods include:

Majority vote: More than half the group members agree on a single choice. A major drawback is that those who voted against the decision may not be committed to its implementation.

Unanimous vote: All group members agree. Problems may arise because some people who feel the pressure to agree may not really support the decision and because one person can block the decision by disagreeing.

Consensus: Internal discussion and polls take place to find common points of agreement. In the course of trying to reach consensus, group members suggest modifications to the original proposal that may be acceptable to others, resulting in a genuine agreement to implement the revised decision. Although it is time-consuming, this method is the most appropriate one when important policy decisions are being made.

Many believe that decisions made by consensus are of higher quality than those arrived at in other ways. Consensus is a collective opinion arrived at by a group whose members have listened carefully to the opinions of others, have communicated openly, and have been able to state their opposition to other members' views and seek alternatives in a constructive manner. When a decision is made by consensus, all members – because they have had the opportunity to influence it – should feel they understand the decision and can support it.

Johnson and Johnson (1975) provide the following guidelines for consensus decision making:

- Avoid blindly arguing for your own individual judgments. Present your position as clearly and logically as possible, but listen to other members' reactions and consider them carefully before you press your point.
- Avoid changing your mind *only* to reach agreement and avoid conflict. Support only solutions to which you are at least somewhat agreeable. Yield only to positions that have an objective and logically sound foundation.
- Avoid "conflict-reducing" procedures such as majority vote, tossing a coin, averaging or bargaining in reaching decisions.
- Seek out differences of opinion; they are natural and expected. Try to involve everyone in the decision process. Disagreements can help the group's decision because they present a wide range of information and opinions, creating a better chance for the group to hit upon more adequate solutions.
- Do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose when discussion reaches a stalemate. Instead, look for the next most acceptable alternative for all members.
- Discuss underlying assumptions, listen carefully to one another, and encourage the participation of all members.

8. Evaluation

Written scale: Typically, using this method, participants rate a meeting or training session around several areas on a scale of one to five. For example:

Today's session was:

Not	1	2	3	4	5	Very
productive						productive
Not	1	2	3	4	5	Very
well-organized						well-organized

Open-ended assessment: This method provides for more information and is especially useful if you are working with a particular group over time. The responses can help inform what a particular group of learners will need next, and will provide the trainer with feedback about whether or not their expectations were met. The following statements can be placed in the top of each of four quadrants of a 8.5"x11" piece of paper.

I came expecting . . .

I got . . .

I value . . .

Next I need . . .

Quick written or non-verbal feedback: There are several methods that can provide quick access to participants' assessment of a workshop, a reading assignment, or other training process. Immediately following the activity, ask participants to give you a thumbs-up if they thought the activity was very interesting or helpful; a thumbs-down if they did not find it useful or engaging; and a thumbs-parallel if they are neutral about the activity. Another method is to ask participants to record on 3" x 5" cards one thing they liked and one suggestion for improvement. Alternately, ask participants to engage in 5-minutes of journaling – i.e. simply write for 5-minutes anything that comes to mind about their experience.

Straightforward discussion: This is often the most direct and effective form of evaluation, and it provides an added opportunity to talk about the process of the session, not just the content. Basically, the facilitator asks for the following information:

- What did you like about the session? What worked well for you? What do you feel you learned?
- What did you dislike about the session? What didn't work well?
- What would you change in the next session to address any concerns you've identified?

People often avoid this method because they are not comfortable with raising concerns, but as a trainer, you can help to model positive ways to share concerns with other adults. The key is for participants to say why something didn't work for them, and then to suggest an alternative--essentially the same approach that adults use with children. Consider how different it feels to hear "Mary let Sue dominate the meeting," compared to, "When one person talks a lot, it's hard for me to break into the discussion. It would help if you make sure that other people have spoken before calling on the same person a second time."

9. Parting Thoughts

- Be prepared.
- Know your audience.
- Embrace participants' ideas and interests.
- Use appropriate tone of voice and body language. It has been estimated that over half of your message depends on body language, one-third on tone of voice, and less than ten percent on the words you choose.
- Celebrate the unexpected.
- Demonstrate a sense of humor – have fun!

Chapter 1. Finding Our Voices, Telling Our Stories

The following quotations come from a recent gathering of child care activists. Some who spoke had had many years of experience, while others were nearly brand new to the field. The group posed two questions to each other: "How did we first become active in working for social change?" and "What keeps us going?" As you read, think about your own story, and how it may differ from or resemble what these people have to say about their lives.

"When I was still in school, learning about child care salaries really gave me pause about entering the field. I didn't receive any advocacy training; no one prepared me for the realities of the job. But still there was nothing I wanted to do as much as this. So far, it's been worth it to me to do the work I love, but I don't know how long I can make it."

"I was doing a salary survey in my community, and I called the Worthy Wage Campaign for help; I felt so angry and frustrated about the same old dilemmas continuing year after year. The campaign has kept me hopeful--the new people coming in to carry this work on."

"From an early age, my parents were strong role models for me in taking action for justice and peace. And my connections with peers in child care, at gatherings like this, are what keep me going now. I love my work and I don't want to leave it."

"Having a mentor who's been active in the child care movement for a long time helps me believe that I can do it too."

"My first experience of being part of a movement was the 1963 March on Washington; then, years of working for welfare rights; and of course, having five kids of my own, and needing good child care, and not always getting it. Eventually I became a teacher in the Head Start program. Love of children got me started; what keeps me going is that the work isn't finished. I was raised with the attitude that you stay on and finish the job."

"For three years I've been helping to organize a local group of family day care providers--mostly older and poor women, about 60 percent of them African American, with wages as low as 71 cents an hour and no benefits. Recently a member of our group had to be rushed to the hospital--she'd put off getting medical help for too long, because she had no health insurance. What keeps me going is seeing people stand up and fight for themselves."

"Having a baby made me an 'instant feminist,' and it thrust me into the child care world, ready or not. I saw not only the issue of affordability for parents, but how teachers constantly sacrifice themselves. That experience motivated me to devote my skills to doing teacher education and support. I see a strong traditional role in our field, especially for women, of constantly placing other people's needs first. The generosity of caregiving is a wonderful quality--but how can we combine this caring with a desire for justice?"

"Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers were a strong early influence. And of course, any person of color experiences discrimination in her life. It's also been inspiring to be part of a union with a long history, an early childhood local that began in 1949. I'm lucky to have a union, but we still face a lot of injustice. As a leader and grievance officer I depend on having a lot of grassroots involvement out there; I can't do it alone."

"I worked for 16 years as a center classroom teacher, most of the time in a cooperative where I learned all aspects of the job, including budgeting and hiring--an experience that's rare now, unfortunately. But when I first began I worked in a horrible center where I was really mistreated and eventually fired. My sister was a strong role model, and she challenged me to confront that employer. I started a teacher support group, and years later, it's great to see how many people from the group are still active in some form of work for social change, even if not in child care."

"What keeps me going is that I like to win, and I believe if you organize competently you can win. I love a good fight. And humor and fun are very important along the way."

What are some of the common threads in these stories?

One, perhaps, is the recognition that the personal is political. Most activists can remember some kind of early spark or breakthrough, a moment when they came to see *themselves* as activists, even as winners--a time when they first experienced a feeling of power. Many mention the importance of leadership--the presence of role models or mentors who noticed them and helped them find their way.

At some point in their lives, whatever path they take, leaders must somehow come to feel inspired, capable, and hopeful about the possibility of change. At first, however, many of us also have to recognize and confront feelings of anger, isolation, and powerlessness. But time and again, we have found that articulating our own stories, and hearing others tell what they have experienced and learned, makes us stronger and more

aware of our common strengths. We become less isolated, and more a part of a community and a movement.

Naming and clarifying the issues in our child care work, and becoming aware of our rights, helps us to feel more legitimate and worthy in what we do. Identifying the truths of our own experience helps us counteract the notion that truth is something that can only be defined by "experts" or others.

Questions for Discussion

Any of the following questions can be the springboard for "finding our voices and telling our stories" at a group meeting, class or training session.

Our personal backgrounds

- How did I decide to enter the child care field? How much training did I receive in advance? How prepared was I for the realities of the job?
- How does low compensation affect me personally? What difficulties does it create in my life? How does it affect how I feel about my own worthiness and skill as a child care worker?
- What do I like or value most about child care work? What are the greatest rewards in it for me?
- What first motivated or inspired me to become active in working for social change, whether in the Worthy Wage Campaign or elsewhere? (For those who have been active awhile: What keeps me going?)
- Who has been a mentor or leader to me, and why?

Tell a story about a time when....

- someone outside our field belittled in some way the work you do. What did you do or say? If you had the experience over again, would you do or say anything different?
- you stood up for yourself or for someone else--either on the job or elsewhere. What worked or didn't work, and why? What were the conflicts or barriers you faced?

- you did something to improve your work environment. For example, you raised your rates, asked for a raise, advocated successfully for an improvement in your benefits, or shared in making an important policy decision. What were the immediate consequences, good and bad? What were the long-term consequences?

Brainstorming in groups

- Ask the group the following three questions, and chart the answers on three large pieces of newsprint: What do we give as child care teachers and providers to children? To families? To our communities? (Emphasize the importance of becoming articulate about what we do.) Then, charting the answers on another large piece of newsprint, ask, What do we deserve in return for what we give? Are we asking too much? (Emphasize the importance of making our needs known to our communities.)
- Ask each person in the group to think of someone they consider a leader--not a famous person, but someone who is a part of their life. As a group, list on chart paper the characteristics and qualities they have observed in these 'leaders'. Then, make another list of the characteristics of a skilled child care professional. Note the overlap in the two lists. You can extend this exercise by asking everyone to turn to the person next to them and saying which of these qualities they have themselves, what their strengths are, and what areas they want to improve on.

A session on "finding our voices" could include many different kinds of stories, both personal and collective--about our own experiences on the job or in other areas of our lives, and also about other people and other movements. The objective is not to ask people to expose private information about themselves, but to show that as we build a child care teachers' and providers' movement, we all have something to contribute in naming the issues and identifying solutions.

The group should make an effort to allow everyone to speak, but also should let anyone hold back and listen who doesn't feel ready to participate. If you have a large group, break into small groups or pairs for the discussion, both to maximize your time and to help participants feel more comfortable; everyone doesn't have to hear every single story. Small groups can then report back to the larger group about what they've heard.

Keep in mind, too, that not all the stories will necessarily be upbeat, or hopeful, or what we "want to hear." Before a group can find common purpose and a sense of power, it may first have to come to terms with frustration, anger, conflict, even despair.

Your role as a facilitator is a particularly important one here, in allowing for the emotional responses that a discussion of our experiences and challenges in child care workplaces can raise. You can help to maintain focus on the group's goals and keep the discussion moving, so that "telling our stories" doesn't become merely a gripe session, but rather sets the stage for some analysis and action. You can help the group create a larger framework for understanding the issues by identifying common themes in their stories, as well as differences and disagreements.

Finding our voices and telling our stories is an essential first stage of taking action--but it is not the ultimate goal. As one trainer characterizes the process, the point is "*not just telling your story, but putting your story to work.*" Each session might end with some kind of discussion of action--simple next steps we all can take. For example, where can each of us go to encourage other teachers and providers to talk about compensation and break the silence on these issues? The theme of Chapter 2 is how to connect our own experiences with the larger context of the child care system and the political world. Putting our stories to work, by building our skills and taking action, is the subject of Chapter 3.

Other Activities and Exercises

1. *The ABC Child Care Story.* Read "The ABC Child Care Center: A Turnover Story," available from CCW (and included, with illustrations, in the CCW publication *Taking On Turnover: An Action Guide for Child Care Center Teachers and Directors.*) Then try any or all of the following activities that build on this story:
 - a. Try a group role play in which different people adopt the roles of the various characters in the story, to explore the ways that turnover personally affects teachers, administrators, children and parents. Or role play one of the scenes: for example, when Sonja goes in to talk to the director.
 - b. Either as a group or on their own, ask the group to write a sequel to the ABC Story. What happens next? Does the situation get worse? Does it get turned around for the better? For example:
 - What if Sonja enticed Cathy back to her old job?
 - What if Maria decided to talk to other parents and take their concerns to the Board?
 - What if Joyce took these turnover problems to the whole staff and asked for their help?

- c. Ask members of the group to try reading the ABC Story at a staff, parent or board meeting -- or to a group of policy makers or elected officials -- to introduce a discussion on how to "take on turnover" in child care programs. They may want, as many others have done, to photocopy enlargements of the story to make an oversized, easy-to-read version of the book. (Children can help decorate or color it, too.)
2. *Claiming our identity.* Display the word "Babysitter" on a large piece of paper, and ask participants to write down phrases or words that they associate with this word. Next, on other sheets, display the words "Child Care Teacher" and "Family Child Care Provider." What words or phrases do we associate with these words? Do any words from the first list transfer to this one? Which words do we discard in order to claim our own professional identity?
3. *Props and display panels.* In the time-honored child care tradition of "make and take workshops," many Worthy Wage groups have found ways of "representing" their stories and making them concrete in the form of props, tools and other objects. Ask the group to brainstorm about things they could take back to their jobs, or to an event or action, that could help them articulate their experiences. If they had to use a slogan or one-liner on a sign-board to describe their situation as a child care teacher or provider to a total stranger, what would it be?

Display panels: A number of LEAP and Worthy Wage groups have made display panels about themselves that they take to conferences, workshops, rallies and other gatherings. Large panels with photographs and captions can be a very effective way to document and describe a group's history, goals and achievements to the wider community. (See *Spreading the News*, by Margie Carter and Deb Curtis, a resource guide for creating display panels to document our work.)

Other props: Some groups have made stuffed dolls to take to demonstrations, parades or lobbying events, carrying slogans about the child care staffing crisis. A recent CCW prop is a plastic key-shaped key chain, given away at conferences, reading "Worthy wages are the key to quality child care." Others have printed up ten-dollar "play money" bills with local Worthy Wage Campaign information on the back, to pass out in public along with requests to donate "real money for worthy wages."

Chapter 2. Reflection, Analysis and Vision

People don't automatically "learn from experience." Rather, we learn from reflecting on it, determining what it means, and interpreting it in the larger contexts of community and history. Once we have become articulate in telling our stories and naming the most pressing issues in our work, we also become ready to see *past* the limits of our own experience, and to see how it connects to what others have seen and felt. As we study the child care system and the common plight of child care workers, we become aware of a long-standing pattern of disempowerment and injustice. Then, we become ready to work toward changing it.

The teaching and learning process itself is a crucial part of making change. An effective teacher or leader doesn't simply hand out information or directions to a passive audience. Teaching is most likely to lead to deep and lasting change when it hands people the tools they need: in this case, the critical skills that will enable us as child care workers to evaluate our experience and to realize--*make real* to ourselves--what we know.

The purpose of this chapter is to offer some guidelines for learning from our stories: what to listen for, what questions to ask, how to tie personal stories to larger issues, and how to create opportunities for reflection and inquiry.

As we listen to each other, what are the common questions, problems and needs that we hear? A trainer or facilitator can use the group's own stories to illustrate shared dilemmas in the child care field as well as larger forces that are present in society. Frequently, our stories also reveal self-perceptions about our own power and worth--what we feel we're able or unable to do in terms of creating solutions. This can lead the group to ask what our *internal* barriers might be--the ways in which we play a role ourselves in maintaining the present system. The goal is an analysis not only of the power structure as it relates to the child care profession, but of our own power.

Various kinds of information are critical here in helping the group move toward a larger understanding of the issues. Much of it is available through the resources and publications listed at the end of this book; some may have to be collected and developed by the group itself or by the local community. If we perceive the current structure as unfair, then we need to gain a critical perspective on how it developed. Why, for example, is the care of young children still prevalently seen in the U.S. as a personal rather than a public responsibility? Why is taking care of pets or cars a better-paying job than teaching children? The status quo in child care isn't merely an innocent outcome; it's the product of a certain economic system. It's the result of certain values, decisions, and uses of power.

Because understanding the economics of child care is so important in analyzing the problem and crafting solutions that improve quality and improve jobs, CCW has worked with the organization Just Economics to develop an economic education curriculum for the child care workforce. Many LEAP trainings incorporate economic education activities into the agenda, and future drafts of this guide will include more material from the Economics of Child Care curriculum.

In particular, child care activists can be strengthened by learning about:

- how wealth in our country is distributed, and how it has shifted over time to be concentrated in fewer and fewer people's hands. (By looking at wealth in the U.S., we can expose the myth that resources are too scarce to fix such social problems as an under-funded child care system.)
- how child care employment relates to the larger social pattern of inequality for women.
- the diversity among ourselves in the child care workforce, in terms of race, class, culture, professional roles and educational backgrounds. (These differences affect the opportunities and resources that we have in the profession, as well as the solutions to child care problems that we propose.)
- the rights of child care employees in the workplace, the child care and labor regulations that govern our work environments, and the variety of possible responses or remedies when violations occur.
- current data on salaries, benefits and working conditions in the community, state and nation.
- the power structure that governs decision-making about child care policy.
- the history of the movement for child care compensation and quality, as well as other movements for social change.

At the same time, looking at child care *only* in terms of the present structure can actually keep us from developing a vision of what a better structure might be. It's easy to get into a depressed and negative view of our situation--in effect, letting information deaden rather than empower us. A class, workshop or other group can turn this around by constantly posing the question, "What can we say 'yes' to?" In other words, what is our vision of quality child care, both for children and for the adults who care for them? What

would good working conditions be? Without this kind of vision, a movement can all too easily lose its way, sidetracked by momentary crises and lesser conflicts. The *Model Work Standards* for center-based and family child care, developed by the Center for the Child Care Workforce in collaboration with teachers and providers throughout the country, are one attempt to create a vision of good child care jobs.

Keep in mind, too, that conflict can come with inclusiveness as a movement grows. We won't always reach consensus about what our experiences mean and what we should do to work toward change. Throughout this process of reflection and inquiry, one of your roles as a trainer and facilitator is to make room for controversy, create a safe environment to air different points of view, and keep the dialogue open.

Questions for Discussion

1. *Defining empowerment.* Generate a list of responses from the group to the following questions: What does empowerment mean to you? If you feel you don't have power, who took it away or how did you lose it? What would teacher/provider empowerment look like at your workplace? What would have to change? What kinds of decision-making and problem-solving processes would there be? What training opportunities would you have? What would the climate be between staff and administration, or staff and parents?
2. *Analyzing low wages in child care.* Each of the following questions could lead to a half-hour discussion or more, either separately or as part of a longer workshop.
 - a. What are the effects of low wages in child care--on me, on the child care profession, on children, on families, on society?
 - b. Why are child care wages so low?
 - c. What are the obstacles, both structural and personal, to improving compensation?
 - d. How can we overcome these obstacles?
 - e. What do I need, as an individual, to be able to take action for worthy wages?
3. *Our current jobs.* Ask the group to consider:
 - a. What are the most urgent issues at my workplace, in terms of working with children, parents, or other staff?
 - b. What are the barriers to change that exist in my workplace?
 - c. What barriers might there be *within myself* to taking action for myself or my co-workers, or for the children?

4. *Activists as risk-takers.* At different stages of our work in the child care compensation movement, each of us has different amounts of time and energy to give. Ask the group to list what they might risk by becoming more active in the movement. Then ask each person to look at their list, and consider which risks they are willing, and not willing, to take at this time. Finally, ask the group: what are the risks of *not* getting involved in the compensation movement?

Other Activities and Exercises

1. *The "job game."* Pass out index cards with an occupation written on each one. In making the cards, choose occupations that contain some aspect of child care work--such as public relations specialist, health care provider, counselor, mediator, musician, plumber, interior decorator, furniture repair person, athlete, fund-raiser, and so on. Ask the group to pass the cards around and choose one they like. Then ask: "How many of you have an occupation card that includes a part of the work you do in child care? How many of you are holding a card for an occupation that earns less than you do? More than you do?" The show of hands will probably generate laughter, but also a discussion of "what's going on here and why," since most are likely to say that this other occupation commands a higher salary than their own.
2. *Workplace scenarios.* Starting with local workplace problems, rather than immediately taking on the whole child care compensation crisis, can be a source of empowerment-- a way of seeing how a small action can bring about positive changes. For many people, fictional scenarios also feel much safer to discuss at first. Since they're not explicitly about our own personal experience, they can be an easier way of getting into such issues as low wages, high turnover, and how the staffing crisis affects us and the children in our care.

Present the group with a specific dilemma or issue for their analysis--a workplace problem from their own or others' experience. The following are three examples, or the group could supply their own:

- a. *Changes in work schedule.* You are a teacher who normally works from 6:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with a one-hour unpaid lunch break from noon to 1:00 p.m. Your director comes to you one morning and tells you that the person who typically closes has just resigned. She tells you that beginning tomorrow, until that position is replaced, you will need to work until 5:30 to assure that an experienced staff member is on at the end of the day. Either you can work a split shift with a longer unpaid break in the middle of the day, or you can start work later and she will adjust other people's morning schedules. As it stands, your eight-hour work

day has already been challenging and your break time often doubles as planning time. But your current departure time works for you and your family, since your school-age child gets off the bus at 3:45 and you arrive home just in time to greet him. You don't want this new schedule. What can you do?

b. *Payment for training.* You are a teacher in a child care center and have been employed there for three months. Your director wants everyone on the staff to have training in implementing an anti-bias curriculum in the classroom. You are required to go to a training session scheduled on a Saturday and to purchase the book for the class (the class costs \$35.00, and the book costs an additional \$20.00). You are told that it is your responsibility to cover any costs, and that you will not be paid for the time you spend at the training. How will you handle this situation?

c. *Policy changes.* The policy in your family child care program is to provide a substitute provider when you are sick, but in cases when the program must be closed and parents have to find their own alternate care arrangement, they are not billed for your absence. The staffing crisis in your community is making substitute providers increasingly scarce, and your regular sub recently got a job in a child care center. Reflecting on the past year, you realize that too often you have been forced to work when you were sick because you could not risk the loss of income. In addition to yourself, your children have suffered the consequences. You want to change this policy. How will you go about doing it?

In small groups, ask participants to discuss, or write down on paper, how to handle one of these situations. (Alternatively, the small groups can try role-playing different points of view.) What is the problem here? Who holds the power to change it? What could be done? The small groups can then report back to the larger group, which can compare notes and add suggestions. Write the group's responses on a large sheet of paper, and help the group to divide the various responses into categories.

3. *Barriers to change.* The following lists of statements can be the basis for identifying some of the group's assumptions and attitudes about the barriers they face. It's also a good "physical" activity that gets people moving around the room. Ask participants to respond to each statement by deciding, is this a significant obstacle to improving child care working conditions and salaries? Based on their answers, each person should move either to an area of the room marked "yes" or to one marked "no." To encourage debate, ask these subgroups to defend their answers. Anyone who is persuaded by someone else's argument should feel free to change his or her position.

Why child care compensation is low

- a. You can't expect a high salary for work that most people consider unskilled.
- b. Child care workers are too isolated and unorganized to build a powerful movement for better compensation.
- c. Child care workers are so concerned about parents' needs that they're willing to accept low wages in order to keep parent fees down.
- d. Even if they agree that child care workers are underpaid, consumers aren't willing to pay more taxes or higher fees to improve the situation.
- e. Resources are scarce; there simply isn't enough money to fix the child care system.
- f. The child care workforce is uninterested in – if not opposed to – the idea of organizing for change.

How change happens

- a. Drawing attention to your problems often works against you in the long run.
 - b. Unions are the only way for workers to improve their situation.
 - c. Only groups with power and money can change public opinion.
 - d. Corporate America doesn't care about child care, and without their support it will never improve.
4. *Creating a collective vision of good child care jobs.* What is our vision of quality child care, both for children and for the adults who care for them? What would a good work environment look like? (This is also an opportunity to make the link between good care for children and good work environments for adults. See also CCW's guides to *Model Work Standards* in center-based and family child care, listed at the end of this guide.) Try either of the following "visioning" activities:
- a. *A 'web.'* With all participants standing in a circle, one person holds a ball of yarn, names one piece of her vision for a good child care work environment, and holding the end of the yarn, tosses the ball to someone else in the circle. This person names a piece of her vision, holds her end of the yarn, and tosses the ball to someone else. Eventually, everyone has contributed to an interconnected web. Take time to reflect on the vision that the group has created.
 - b. *A 'working model.'* Divide into small groups (3-5 people), give each group a bag of recyclable 'junk,' along with markers and a large piece of card stock or poster board, and give them time to create a representation of a good child care work environment. The groups should then tour each other's work and present their visions for the others to reflect upon; the results can be amazing!

5. *Case studies.* Study another social change organization or coalition effort, including any that group participants may have been involved in themselves. Examples include the nursing profession, home health care workers, the Rhode Island group DARE which won health benefits for family child care providers, or the Berkeley Task Force on Child Care Compensation. Alternatively, have a guest speaker from such a movement or organization come to describe his or her work. Or ask each group member, as a homework assignment, to identify and interview an activist in the community. Ask:

- How did the movement or action began?
- How did it grow and get stronger?
- How did leadership evolve?
- What can the child care movement, or this LEAP group, learn from this example?

Another possibility, depending on how much time you have at your training event, is to watch a film or video together about a movement or an individual dealing with injustice--ranging from the Highlander Center film, "You've Got to Move," to "Ready or Not Here We Come! Voices of Child Care Workers," a short video produced by the Worthy Wage Campaign of the Delaware Valley. (See the resource list at the end of this guide.) In the case of "You've Got to Move," which highlights three different movements, you might want to use only one of the three sections.

Chapter 3. Taking Action

When individuals who share a common problem join together, their combined voices carry more power. Since it began in 1991, the Worthy Wage Campaign has created a chorus of child care teachers, providers and allies in communities across the country. Together we have spoken out about our shared experiences, educated communities about the consequences of low pay on ourselves and on the children and families we serve, and sought solutions to the compensation crisis.

Many other teachers and providers have gotten involved with the Campaign through early childhood education classes or at a conference; others were members of existing groups such as NAEYC affiliates that decided to become active for worthy wages. Many began local Campaign groups in their communities with as few as five people at the start, for the purpose of taking some kind of action on the annual Worthy Wage Day, May 1. And many others, whether connected with the Campaign or not, have become child care activists by participating in LEAP trainings.

The creativity released through LEAP, the Worthy Wage Campaign and other child care activism has been endless in recent years, as local groups around the country have designed their own actions. The following are some examples:

Public awareness. When the Worthy Wage Campaign began in 1991, it set as a short-term goal "to increase public awareness about the low pay in our field." The involvement of many new allies in working on compensation initiatives, and the many news stories in the national and local media on child care workforce concerns, have signaled to us that we have indeed made enormous progress toward this goal.

Community initiatives. Teachers and providers have launched Model Work Standards projects to improve their working conditions, union organizing drives, and mentoring programs to link training with better pay. California advocates have developed the California CARES bill, a legislative effort to provide financial rewards to experienced and committed teachers and providers. In Seattle, the Business/Child Care Partnership has channeled corporate contributions toward helping child care programs increase wages. In Rhode Island, a family child care provider group called DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality) successfully pressured the state to offer state employee health benefits to providers caring for state-subsidized children.

Collaborations and coalitions. To link their concerns with those of other low-wage workers, teachers and providers have joined forces with local Living Wage Campaigns, Jobs with Justice efforts, and a variety of labor unions.

Gaining "a place at the table." In a number of communities, teachers and providers have won an influential role in policy-making bodies for the first time, including county-level Smart Start commissions which allocate North Carolina's child care funds, and Colorado's child care planning group, the Summit of 12.

Creating an Action Plan

Once we have expressed and reflected upon our experiences as child care teachers or providers, we become ready to act to make things better. This chapter explores how teachers and providers can step forward to do something about the plight of our profession, by working with others in a group to take action. The five steps to making an action plan are:

1. Defining your goals
2. Mapping your community
3. Developing strategies
4. Identifying skills and resources
5. Writing the plan

1. Defining Your Goals

Broadly speaking, the goal of our movement is a fully-funded child care system with high-quality services for all children and families who need them, and high-quality work environments for teachers and providers. But achieving this long-term goal will require a major overhaul of how we value (and dedicate resources toward) children, families and women in our society. These changes will not be won easily or quickly. To maintain hope and to sustain ourselves, we also have to articulate some achievable, short-term goals that will lead us toward our ultimate vision.

As a LEAP trainer, one of your major roles will be to facilitate a group process for establishing goals to begin working toward. Note that these goals should come from the group itself--not from you as the facilitator! The issues that *they* identify as the most pressing in their community--the things they most want to change--are what they will be most motivated to act on. The following are some child care workforce issues that the group may want to address in its goal statement:

- achieving salary or rate increases in the workplace
- improving specific working conditions in the workplace
- developing a community initiative to boost child care compensation, such as a mentoring program or another effort to link training with higher pay

- influencing the way in which state or local child care funds are spent
- building public awareness and community support for better child care jobs
- developing or promoting legislation.

In these first two areas, the Model Work Standards for center-based and family child care--a vision of high-quality work environments based largely on the input of teachers, directors and providers throughout the country--can be a good starting point for discussion. How do they compare with group members' own working conditions? Could they serve as a statement of the group's long-term goals? Where would participants like to begin in making improvements in their workplaces?

Try not to bite off too much at first. You can revisit your list of goals after several months or a year, and then select more. Some groups may want to go through each area listed above, taking the time to define goals in each area and then setting priorities. Be sure to analyze your short-term goals in terms of how they will contribute to your long-range vision.

2. Mapping Your Community

Next, as a group, assess the current status of the child care workforce movement in your community, considering the following questions:

1. What activities are currently taking place to improve child care quality and compensation? Who is involved; what are they doing; how are they approaching the goal? What power do you have? (*Your Strengths*)
2. Which other groups and individuals might be interested in getting involved in these issues? Who are your allies? How can you gain their support? (*Your Potential*)
3. What are the identifiable barriers to organizing an action plan in your community? Who might resist you, and what strength do they have? How can you overcome their resistance? (*Your Weaknesses*)

3. Developing Strategies

Figuring out what you want is sometimes easier than figuring out how to get it! The next step is to ask the group to brainstorm strategies for achieving their goal, building on their community's strengths.

Record all the responses on a flip chart. For example: would it mean going to one's director or supervisor, or to a Board meeting? Some kind of direct action in the community? Raising funds?

At the end of the brainstorming session, help the group reach consensus on strategy, using the guidelines for Decision Making outlined in the chapter "Notes and Tips for Trainers," above.

4. Identifying Skills and Resources

Ask the group to consider:

- What skills will you need as a group in order to carry out your action plan?
- Which of these do you personally know how to do already?
- Which do you want to learn (or improve on)?
- How can the group continue to work together to build these skills?
- What resources do you need (e.g., money, equipment, materials)?
- Can your group accomplish the goal alone, or do you need the help of other people? Do you need to form a coalition?
- Which individuals or groups do you know in the community who can help?

To help the group brainstorm about the skills and resources they need, use the following list of ways that different people can all contribute to a successful community action.

making signs or other props
designing flyers or other written materials
telling your story at a workshop or other event
hosting a meeting
recruiting new members or supporters
writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper
contacting or responding to the media
researching background information to strengthen your message (for example:
facts about child care workers' salaries in your community or in other
states, or examples of successful actions by teachers and providers)
public speaking
lobbying/visiting legislators and other decision makers
fundraising.

Practicing Skills. Practice is an essential part of skill building, whether you are a child care advocate or an athlete. Although most LEAP training events are too brief to allow much time for working intensively on building certain leadership skills, your group can analyze what skills they want to work on, and plan for ways to continue working together to practice them. Here are two examples of practice sessions that could be incorporated into a LEAP training or as part of a follow-up on skill development:

a. Those who want to learn to write articles about child care workforce issues might practice by writing letters to the editor of a local paper. Working in pairs, individuals exchange their letters with a partner and give each other feedback and constructive comments. If there is a 'hot topic' in your community deserving of media attention--and we can always find one--you may even want to send it in to the paper.

b. Public speaking is particularly challenging for most of us, but practice helps! Imagine that you've been asked to testify at a public hearing that is addressing program quality issues in your community. You have two minutes to speak. What will you say? Take time to plan your comments and then practice them in front of your peers, whose role is to provide you with helpful feedback.

Building a coalition. If the group's strategy for achieving its goal includes seeking outside supporters, begin by identifying who should be contacted. Either at the training itself, or at their next meeting, the group could generate the following list:

Name	Phone Number	Who will contact?	Their response?
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If the group wants to undertake the more challenging task of building a community coalition for better child care jobs, remember:

- Coalition building requires a strong foundation of support *within* the child care community, before it can spread outward to other groups. Focus on this 'internal' coalition-building first, and don't forget to include parents.
- Once you have this internal base of support, consider other groups or individuals outside the field who may have some interest in child care workforce issues. Examples of 'external' support are women's organizations, labor groups, human service agencies, community development agencies, businesses, local government, churches, religious groups, foundations, and service organizations...
- In reaching outside the child care field, we need to define our common areas of interest, and speak clearly in language that is commonly understood and/or geared

to the particular group you're trying to enlist. Remember, the urgency you feel about improving compensations is not yet universally shared.

- Start small. Building relationships with new allies takes time and patience. It is better to form two or three strong relationships over time than to try to cultivate too many relationships and be unable to maintain them all.
- As a beginning place, focus on existing groups and coalitions who have already included child care issues in their agendas.
- As you carry out your action plan, make sure that all coalition members have a role to play in the activities and efforts you undertake.

5. Writing the Plan

Now that the group has identified goals and strategies, and the skills and resources it needs, it is ready to put a fairly detailed plan down on paper. To simplify this process, try using the following worksheet.

5. Skills and other resources needed. Determine if you have the skills needed to carry out your action plan. If not, who has them that you can bring in or how do you get them? Also, what resources, in addition to money, (i.e. materials, equipment, etc.) are needed and how can you get them?

6. Progress/Notes. This action plan is likely to change or need to be re-evaluated along the way, as new opportunities and new barriers present themselves. Be open and flexible, but keep sight of the goal. Check on your progress frequently and report back to each other at future meetings.

7. Evaluation. As time goes on, group members and other collaborators should answer the following questions:

Did we succeed in reaching our goal?

If yes, how will we celebrate and broadcast the news?

If no, what barriers do we still confront?

What did we learn?

What was the actual time and cost involved?

How do we feel about our process? How could we improve it?

What next?

Closure and Next Steps

Finally, before the training ends and the group leaves, be sure to lead at least a brief discussion of the group's immediate next steps, so that everyone can be assured there will be some specific follow-through on what they have decided. This could be as simple as setting a date for their next meeting, and/or identifying two or three volunteers to find out certain kinds of information before then, or make a few phone calls, that will help the group make progress on its plan. Ideally, a LEAP group leaves the training feeling energized, committed to working together, and clear about what to do next. To be a success in building leadership and change in your community, a LEAP training can't be just an end in itself--but it can be a very strong beginning!

Many of us who have participated in LEAP know what a tremendous source of support it is to be with others who know and value what we do each day with children, and who understand the challenges that come from the lack of respect and rewards for our work. This support has helped many of us to stay in the field long past the time when we thought we would have to leave.

We hope, too, that in your work as a LEAP trainer, you will experience the support that enables you to continue growing in the profession, and to help teachers and providers continue working with children and advocating for the resources our profession so desperately needs.

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The Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) was founded in 1978 as the Child Care Employee Project, and was known as the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force from 1994 to 1997. CCW is a nonprofit research, education and advocacy organization committed to improving child care quality by upgrading the compensation, working conditions and training of child care teachers and family child care providers. CCW coordinates the Leadership Empowerment Action Project (LEAP), the Worthy Wage Campaign, and other efforts to promote leadership and career advancement for teachers and providers.

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